Research on drought resistant crops

5132. SHRISANTOSHBAGRODIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any research conducted by any Agricultural Institute in the country on crop yield using less water,

(b) if so, the details of research conducted alongwith the names of institutes;

(c) if not, whether Government feel the need to direct all Agricultural Institutes in the country to conduct such research as most of the States suffer from drought every summer or similar conditions; and

(d) if so, by when Government would respond in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRIHUKUMDEO NARAYAN YAD AV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Several Institutes have developed specific technologies of lesser water use like drip irrigation, sprinkler irrigation, land levelling, conservation tillage, organic & plastic mulches, impermeable sub surface barriers etc. in variou' crops like rice, wheat, tomato, okra, onion, broccoli, cabbage, sugarcane, kinnow, lemon, pomegranate etc. This work has been carried out at Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture, Hyderabad, Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi, Central Arid Zone Research Institute, Jodhpur, Water Technology Centre for Eastern Region, Bhubaneswar, Central Rice Research Institute, Cuttack and ICAR Research Complex for Eastern Region, Patna.

(c) Not applicable.

(d) Does not arise.

Availability of water for agricultural production

5133. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:Will the Minister of AGRICULTURAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country has been experiencing poor rains during the last five years;

(b) if so, the man made reasons therefore and the rain prospects this year;

(c) whether Government have assessed the impact of poor rains on rural income and its purchasing power;.

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps being taken to ensure sufficient availability of water for agricultural production?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) and (b) The monsoon rains in the

country have been less than Long Period Average (LPA) in four out of past five years. According to the revised classification of monsoon rainfall for the country as a whole, the rainfall was below normal (90 to 97% of LPA) inl 999,2000 &2001 and in drought category (less than 90% of LPA) in 2002. In 1998, the monsoon rainfall was above normal (103 to 110% of LPA).

There is no evidence of long term trend in South-west monsoon rainfall which can be attributed to man-made reasons. The inter annual fluctuations are with in the natural variability of monsoon phenomenon.

Based upon the newly adopted 8-Parameter Power Regression Model, India Meteorological Department (IMD's) long range forecast for the 2003 Southwest Monsoon Season (June-September) is that the rainfall for the country as a whole is likely to be 96% of the LPA with a model error of ±5%.

(c) and (d) The impact of poor rains on rural income and its purchasing power is mainly due to adverse impact on agricultural production. However, the temporal and spatial distribution of rainfall is equally important. During 2001, monsoon rainfall was 8% less than LPA for the country as a whole, nevertheless, the agricultural production was an all time high for foodgrains. During 2002, the monsoon rainfall was abnormally low, especially in July, which is the most agriculturally active month; this led to sharp decline in agricultural production in respect of most of the crops. The resultant adverse impact on farm economy was assessed and accordingly drought relief allowance over and above the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for important rabi and kharif crops was announced.

(e) In order to augment the availability of water in country for irrigation and other uses and for their efficient use, a large number of dams have been constructed thereby creating 177 billion cubic metre (BCM) of storage capacity. Another 75 BCM of storage will be created on completion of dams which are under various stages of construction. Proposals to take up additional dams to create a live storage capacity of 132 BCM are also under formulation/consideration. To accelerate creation of irrigation of potential by early completion of ongoing schemes, Government has launched Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP). Central Ground Water Board has also taken up a Central Sector Scheme on "Studies of Recharge to Ground Water" on pilot basis. Assistance is also being extended to State Government under Command Area Development (CAD) Programme for bridging the gap between potential created and utilized. For meeting future requirements of water, as a long term measure, National Water Development Agency have formulated National Perspective Plan for water resources development which envisages interlinking various Peninsular rivers

and Himalayan rivers for transfer of water from surplus basins to water deficit basins.

The Government is conscious of the need to ensure for efficient use of water for agriculture, which in essence is an integral part of sustainable development of agriculture as enshrined in the National Policy on Agriculture. Efforts aimed at diversification of agriculture constitute an important initiative in this direction, because this would facilitate the much-needed shift from the rice-wheat system in areas suffering from the stress on ground water resources. Further, priority is accorded to the holistic and sustainable development of semi-arid rainfed areas through integrated watershed development approach in which the construction of micro irrigation facilities like water harvesting structures, village ponds, check dams, etc. are promoted.

Strike in ICAR

5134. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the staff of Indian Council of Agricultural Research has gone on a strike from 22nd April, 2003;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) what sincere steps have been taken to resolve the issue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRIHUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) No, Sir. (b) and (c) Questions do not arise.

Studies regarding promotion of oil-seeds based bio-diesel

5135. SHRI R P GOENKA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a comprehensive Action Plan is being prepared to launch pilot projects in different areas of the country to promote the use of oilseeds based bio-diesel as an alternative fuel;

(b) if so, the details thereof, including the results of any preliminary studies carried out for the proposed projects;

(c) the details of specific varieties of plants identified for large scale planting for extraction of bio-diesel; and

(d) the details of any known similar projects underway in other countries, especially in Asia?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) The Government is contemplating